United Nations A/61/6 (Part one)

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 July 2006

Original: English

Sixty-first session
Item 117 of the preliminary list*
Programme planning

Proposed strategic framework for the period 2008-2009

Part one: Plan outline

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Background	1–3	2
II.	Longer-term objectives of the Organization	4–8	2
III.	Priorities for the period 2008-2009	9	3
IV.	Structure and format	10–26	4
	A. Objective of the Organization	14–15	5
	B. Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat	16–18	5
	C. Indicators of achievement	19–20	6
	D. Strategy	21	6
	E. Legislative mandates	22–26	7

* A/61/50 and Corr.1.

06-42975 (E) 310706

I. Background

1. The strategic framework for the period 2008-2009 has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 58/269 and 59/275 and the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).

2. The General Assembly, in its resolution 58/269, requested the Secretary-General to prepare for submission to the Assembly a biennial strategic framework to replace the four-year medium-term plan. The Assembly affirmed that the strategic framework shall constitute the principal policy directive of the United Nations and shall serve as the basis for programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

3. By its resolution 59/275, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare and propose a plan outline, reflecting the longer-term objectives of the Organization, and a biennial programme plan in the context of the strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009, based, inter alia, on the following principal criteria:

(a) The longer-term objectives consistent with all the relevant legislative mandates in all areas of the activities of the United Nations;

(b) Outcomes of the intergovernmental conferences and summits;

(c) Inputs from relevant programme managers;

(d) Use of intergovernmentally agreed terms and expressions.

II. Longer-term objectives of the Organization

4. A principal criterion established by Member States for the preparation of the strategic framework is the setting of longer-term objectives consistent with all the relevant legislative mandates in all areas of the activities of the United Nations. While it is not practical to list all the relevant mandates contained in Part one: Plan outline, the mandates collectively form the basis for the preparation of proposals for the period 2008-2009. Consequently, the strategic framework for the period 2008-2009 is a translation of legislative mandates into programmes and subprogrammes. A summary listing of key legislative mandates is included at the end of each programme in Part two: Biennial programme plan.

5. In addressing and applying these legislative mandates for the period 2008-2009 and in the longer term, it is particularly relevant to recall and to draw upon the work carried out at the recent World Summit. The 2005 World Summit Outcome was adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/1. The Heads of State and Government who attended the Summit reaffirmed their faith in the United Nations and their commitment to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. They also reaffirmed the United Nations Millennium Declaration and recognized the valuable role of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including the

Millennium Summit, in mobilizing the international community at the local, national, regional and global levels and in guiding the work of the United Nations.

6. Moreover, the Heads of State and Government reaffirmed the vital importance of an effective multilateral system, in accordance with international law, in order to better address the multifaceted and interconnected challenges and threats confronting our world and to achieve progress in the areas of peace and security, development and human rights, underlining the central role of the United Nations, and committed themselves to promoting and strengthening the effectiveness of the Organization through the implementation of its decisions and resolutions. They recognized that current developments and circumstances require urgent consensus-building on major threats and challenges and committed themselves to translating that consensus into concrete action, including addressing the root causes of those threats and challenges with resolve and determination.

7. In addition, the participants acknowledged that peace and security, development and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. They recognized that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. They reaffirmed that development is a central goal in itself and that sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects constitutes a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities. Furthermore, they acknowledged that good governance and the rule of law at the national and international levels are essential for sustained economic growth, sustainable development and the eradication of poverty and hunger.

8. Since the adoption of the World Summit Outcome, the General Assembly has continued to take action where required, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council by its resolutions 60/180 and 60/251, respectively. Those resolutions as well as all other relevant legislative mandates have been taken into account in preparing the strategic framework for 2008-2009 and in ensuring strategies and related activities that maintain a focus on the longer-term objectives of the Organization. Consistent with past practice, objectives stated in Part two: Biennial programme plan, are not limited to a two-year period and consequently contribute to the overall longer-term objectives of the Organization. In accordance with resolution 59/275, the strategic framework for 2008-2009 has been prepared taking due account of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992. Priorities for the period 2008-2009 are detailed in section III below and further information on the format and structure of the strategic framework and the incorporation of legislative mandates therein is detailed in section IV.

III. Priorities for the period 2008-2009

9. The problems and challenges identified for the current period will continue to be both valid and relevant to the Organization over the period 2008-2009. It is recalled that for the four-year periods 1998-2001 and 2002-2005, and for the two-year period 2006-2007, there were eight priority areas identified by the General Assembly, which covered the bulk of substantive activities of the Organization. As

the conditions which led to those priorities persist, it is proposed that the Assembly may wish to consider reaffirming, or amending, as appropriate, the following priorities for the period 2008-2009, namely:

(a) Maintenance of international peace and security;

(b) Promotion of sustained economic growth and sustainable development in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and recent United Nations conferences;

(c) Development of Africa;

(d) Promotion of human rights;

(e) Effective coordination of humanitarian assistance efforts;

(f) Promotion of justice and international law;

(g) Disarmament;

(h) Drug control, crime prevention and combating international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

IV. Structure and format

10. In accordance with resolution 58/269, the strategic framework comprises Part one: Plan outline, and Part two: Biennial programme plan. The plan covers 27 programmes, each of which corresponds to the work carried out by an organizational entity, usually at the departmental level (and congruent with the relevant section of the programme budget) and is subdivided into a number of subprogrammes. These in turn correspond to an organizational entity, generally at the level of a division.

11. The presentation of each programme of the biennial plan in Part two includes: (a) overall orientation, reflecting the raison d'être of the programme as a whole, changes as a result of the programme's intervention and the anticipated benefits for its end-users; (b) subprogrammes; and (c) a listing of legislative mandates. Each subprogramme follows results-based concepts with respect to the use of the logical framework, reflecting the following elements: (a) objective of the Organization; (b) expected accomplishments of the Secretariat; and (c) indicators of achievement, all of which will form the basis of the forthcoming proposed programme budget document. Each subprogramme includes the strategy to be employed for attaining the expected accomplishments.

12. Through the use of the logical framework, namely, clearer articulation of objectives (the raison d'être of the subprogramme), expected accomplishments (benefits to end-users as a consequence of outputs in order to meet the objective) and indicators of achievement (to measure whether or not accomplishments were attained), programme managers are provided with the basic tools for determining the relevance, usefulness, efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the Organization. The practice of results-based management in the implementation of the mandated programmes and activities is intended to improve the performance of the Secretariat and ensure a fully results-oriented Organization.

13. The medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005 was the first plan to apply the logical framework showing the relationship among objectives, strategy, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, pursuant to the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, Budgeting, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Training and ongoing support continues to be necessary to help departments change their management culture to one that focuses on attaining results instead of on delivering outputs. The offices responsible for the various components of the cycle of programme planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation continue to work closely together, to be more proactive in facilitating departments to become fully results-oriented. Action continues to be taken to improve data systems, establish standards, develop manuals and guidelines, and conduct training. The programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005 (A/61/64) addresses in detail the strengthening of results-based management, monitoring and reporting, with a particular focus on capacity development and lessons learned. The reporting on results in the programme performance report for the biennium 2004-2005 has contributed to a greater understanding of the logical framework, the management of the work programme towards achieving results and the crucial role of feedback in the cycle of planning, programme design and programme implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

A. Objective of the Organization

14. The objective is expressed at the level of the Organization as a whole (Member States and Secretariat), rather than at the level of either intergovernmental or Secretariat action only. In other words, the objective reflects what the subprogramme intends to achieve, not what needs to be done by the entity responsible for implementing the subprogramme. For example, an objective might be "to maintain international peace and security through prevention, control and resolution of conflicts through peaceful means", an objective of the Organization as a whole, but not "to monitor and analyse situations of potential conflict", an activity that is carried out by the Department of Political Affairs. The objective, in terms of the logical framework for programme design, is at the highest level.

15. Efforts have been made to be succinct, capturing the essence of the subprogramme and reflecting language that has been adopted by Member States. The objectives stated in Part two: Biennial programme plan, are not limited to a two-year period.

B. Expected accomplishments of the Secretariat

16. Expected accomplishments (also known as "expected results") are intended to reflect the consequence of the products and services to be delivered by the Secretariat within a two-year period. Expected accomplishments show benefits to end-users and it is therefore incumbent upon programme managers to pay particular attention to the many categories of targeted beneficiaries. Expected accomplishments, when they occur, lead to the fulfilment of the objective. In other words, in terms of the hierarchy of programme design, expected accomplishments appear at a lower level than the objective.

17. While some of the expected accomplishments of the Secretariat cannot be attributable entirely to the Secretariat alone because of the many stakeholders concerned, it is nevertheless feasible to acknowledge that a plausible claim can be made that the activities undertaken and outputs/services delivered by the Secretariat — when properly designed and effectively implemented — contribute to those results. This claim can be further justified by the fact that programme managers, at the budget preparation stage, are required to determine the nature and scope of activities/outputs and select those that would ensure achievement of the expected accomplishments that have been reflected in the biennial programme plan.

18. While a subprogramme might have many individual expected accomplishments, a determination has been made to highlight and include in the biennial programme plan only those that are key and most representative of the subprogramme.

C. Indicators of achievement

19. Efforts continue to be made to focus on selecting key indicators of achievement that are clearly linked to the expected accomplishments, are useful for determining the difference made by the subprogramme and are measurable. The indicators, for the most part, have been formulated to show exactly the data that will be collected for the measurement of the expected accomplishments. A major challenge continues to be the selection, at the stage of planning, of key or strategic indicators that would be meaningful and helpful for determining whether or not results occurred. At the implementation level, however, more indicators could be used to measure other aspects of the subprogramme's work. It is stressed that the indicators would measure only the contribution made by the entity implementing the subprogramme and would not measure the contribution made by other stakeholders.

20. Progress has been made in the area of performance measurement, although the selection of key indicators continues to be a difficult exercise, not unlike what has been experienced at the national level and by other entities of the United Nations system. Improvements have been made since the introduction of results-based budgeting concepts six years ago and there is clear evidence of many more indicators that are measurable and articulated in a way that would show exactly the data that will be collected. The performance measures, namely the baselines and targets, do not appear in the biennial programme plan, but will be included in the programme budget document. Experience gained in the analysis of trends on the basis of data collected for measuring results continues to be an essential tool in refining indicators of achievement and ensuring greater measurability and accountability.

D. Strategy

21. The strategy ("how are we getting there?") highlights the focus of efforts to be made within a two-year period to meet the needs of intended beneficiaries. It reflects the approach to be taken to ensure that the expected accomplishments occur, not the particular activities to be undertaken or the individual outputs to be delivered. For example, a strategy could be "ensuring that development issues are

adequately addressed in intergovernmental debate", not "conducting a meeting" or "preparing a report", which are activities.

E. Legislative mandates

22. Legislative mandates, a listing of which appears at the end of each programme, are addressed to Governments, intergovernmental bodies, United Nations organizations and other entities, as well as to the Secretary-General. Programmes and subprogrammes are established to ensure the successful implementation of those legislative mandates. Responsibility for the success of the programme is therefore not the exclusive preserve of Member States (acting individually or in intergovernmental organs) or of the Secretariat. It is a collective responsibility, and success in achieving the objectives and expected accomplishments is a measure of the degree of success of the international community, working in a harmonious partnership between Member States and the Secretariat.

23. Based on this principle of collective responsibility, the objectives, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement have been formulated to address not only the work of the Secretariat, but also the achievement of the subprogramme as a whole in terms of benefits or positive changes for its intended beneficiaries. Member States request the Secretary-General for assistance or for collaboration in, inter alia, peace operations, electoral processes, application of international norms and standards, compliance with obligations under international instruments and economic and social development. Sometimes the work of the Secretariat involves collaboration and cooperation with other United Nations entities, civil society and the private sector in pursuit of the objectives. The positive changes sought are the consequence of the concerted efforts of many stakeholders.

24. There are general mandates that provide the overall orientation of programmes and subprogrammes and there are specific mandates that require the Secretary-General to undertake a particular activity or to deliver a specific output. This distinction is an important one for the preparation of a plan, since the planning stage focuses on a strategy to translate general legislative mandates into expected accomplishments, while the budget preparation stage takes fully into account the specific requests for individual outputs. The listing of outputs therefore does not appear in the strategic framework; it will appear only in the programme budget document.

25. The preparation of Part two: Biennial programme plan, has involved not only the participation of all departments but also the review by relevant specialized intergovernmental bodies of those programmes falling within their sphere of competence. Recommendations by those bodies for modifications to the proposed biennial programme plan have been incorporated when available. In cases where it has not been possible to incorporate changes because of the scheduling of meetings, the recommendations of those intergovernmental bodies will be made available to the Committee for Programme and Coordination at the time of its review.

26. At the time of preparation of this strategic framework, a number of reforms requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 60/1 were at various stages of completion. In a number of instances, required reviews were yet to be completed, or the consideration of related reports to the Assembly was ongoing. Issues under review included the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Mandating and

delivering: analysis and recommendations to facilitate the review of mandates" (A/60/733), which was requested by the Assembly in paragraph 163 (b) of its resolution 60/1. Programmatic implications which may arise from mandate changes as a result of those reviews will be dealt with in the context of the consideration of the related proposals by the Assembly and, as applicable, in accordance with resolution 58/269.